721 Excitement and enthusiasm decline, and the group returns home.
But some are pushed until realized, [95] and can be very murderous.
726 The Nambikwara usually attack at dawn and extend their ambush by
dispersing throughout the bush. The signal for attack is given from
[534 202] place to place, thanks to the whistle which the Indians carry hanging
from their necks. This little whistle, composed of two bamboo tubes
[136] tied with cotton thread reproduces the cry of the cricket approximately,
and doubtless for that reason has the same name (kalõde) as this insect.

## MAGIC, RITES AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

278 Some beliefs of a magical and religious character also play
[771] their role in social life. The most important is the notion of
nande (bl). To analyze it, we should first say a few words con-
cerning poisons. The Nambikwara are very expert poisoners. They
make curare for their arrows, or at least for some of them, pre-
[415] served in little earthen pots. (1) Without enlarging here upon the

1. The study of the Nambikwara curare was made, on the occasion of our expedition, by our friend and companion Dr. J. A. Vellard. Cf. Vellard, "A preparacão do curare pelos Nambikwaras," Revista do Archivo Municipal de São Paulo, LIX, 1939, p. 5-16; "Communication à l'Académie de Médicine de Paris," id. LVIII, 1931, p. 117-118.

manufacture of the curare, it must be noted that this preparation, although reserved for chiefs and sorcerers, is not surrounded by any ritual and does not give rise to any magical operation. The Indians make the curare publicly, applying recipes and taking precautions which are either essential to the effectiveness of the product or which constitute simple prejudices, but all of which have a positive character. Their attitude towards this poison thus may be considered as scientific. Along with curare, the Nambikwara know other poisons likewise of vegetable origin, and which take the form of powders
[415] contained in small tubes. These are made of quills, feathers, or stalks of bamboo or other wood, cleaned out and corked at both ends with a piece of vegetable pith or cotton, and at times decorated with red dots and lines made with urucu paste. (2) These tubes are

2. Cf. Rondonia. Roquette Pinto collected examples of these tubes and reproduced one of them (Rondonia,

had been poisoned. An attack of reprisal was carefully prepared and took place, in the course of which A1 and A5 distinguished themselves. The six persons composing the mission were killed by beating or pierced with arrows, including a baby of two. Only one woman was found alive by an expedition sent to aid them from Cuiabá. The version which she gave of the events coincides exactly with that which we collected from the main protagonists of the other camp. 177 648 797 [124]

Poison was still to play a role in the life of A6, and this during our stay. We found ourselves visiting (August 1938) at the camp of a neighboring group (a2), and relationships became quickly strained between A6 and our hosts, undoubtedly over the question of women, so that he got the habit of coming to my camp to seek a more friendly atmosphere, at the same time that he shared my food. This fact was noticed, a delegation of four men came to find me one day, and in quite a menacing tone of voice told me to mix some poison (which they brought me along) in the next dish which I would offer to A6; they thought it advisable and indispensable to do away with him at once, for, they told me, he is "very wicked" (kakore) and "is worth nothing" (ajdotiene). I had the greatest difficulty in getting rid of my visitors without opposing them with a refusal which in turn would have exposed me to animosity which I had just learned it was better to avoid, and I considered my best plan of action to exaggerate my ignorance of the language, and to feign obstinate lack of comprehension. After several attempts, my visitors retired very disappointed. I warned A6 who immediately disappeared. I was to see him again only four months later. 278 578

These incidents are characteristic of Nambikwara psychology. The Nambikwara are very open, confident and spontaneous, but they are very sensitive and react with great violence to deception [125] or disappointment. Few primitives are as easily accessible. Few give as free access to their intimate lives, to their beliefs, daily acts, thoughts and sentiments. But despite this facility and cordiality, the visitor, be he an ethnographer or a member of a neighboring tribe—must constantly be on guard and watch his actions; for the slightest imprudence, the least clumsiness, may incite reactions difficult to evaluate among his hosts, and in connection with which recent events are always present to recall that they may be extreme. A6 offered a perfect example of this confidence and spontaneity, allied with brusk manifestations of violence and irritability. 157 648

Thus, the Nambikwara character alternately presents two aspects, or more exactly, testifies to a double nature: one which we shall call positive, and which goes much farther in this sense than among many Indians in contact for centuries with the whites; and the other, of metaphysical nature, whose rigor and exaltation at times evoke the mysticism of the North 157

2: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939)1948
SP17 Nambicuara SP17



string (secondary release). Four types of arrows are used: (1) featherless fishing arrow with three to five prongs; (2) bird arrow with a blunt point; (3) big-game arrow with a lanceolate bamboo point; and (4) poisoned arrow, used chiefly for hunting monkeys, with several barbs which are attached to the point with cotton wrapping and which break easily in the wound, being, therefore, usually protected by a bamboo sheath. The last three have a bamboo shaft and "Arara" feathering. Sewed feathering is known by the central and northern groups but seldom used. For warfare, big game arrows with serrated bamboo points are used.

*Nambicuara* arrow poison is a curare prepared by grating the root of a *Strychnos* shrub, and by infusing (*Eastern Nambicuara*) or boiling (*Central* and *Northern Nambicuara*) it until the water evaporates and leaves a thick brownish substance, which is smeared on a wax-coated arrow point. It can be preserved in tiny pots for several months. Among South American arrow poisons, it is remarkable because it is made of only one vegetable substance and is prepared openly—in some groups by the chief or shaman, in other groups by anyone—without magical practices or taboos. Its great toxic properties were studied by Vellard (1939 b).

Other poisons of unknown composition are used for amorous or political revenge. They are in the form of powders and are kept in tubes made of feather quills, bamboo, or other woods, each ornamented with paintings and cotton or bark wrappings.

Clubs are carved in the shape of a flattened or cylindrical pointed spade; the handle is often adorned with black and white plaiting of philodendron bark and bamboo strips. Their purpose is mostly ceremonial.

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Kinship terms identify parallel-cousins with siblings, and cross-cousins with potential or actual spouses. Cross-uncles and cross-aunts are called by the same terms as parents-in-law and grandparents; parallel-uncles and parallel-aunts are equated with parents. Similarly, parallel-nephews and parallel-nieces are classed with children, and cross-nephews and cross-nieces with children-in-law. Marriage is between cross-cousins or between the maternal uncle and his niece. Monogamy is the rule, but polygyny is the privilege of the chief and other important men. Polygyny is usually with several sisters (sororal) or with a woman and her daughters by a former union. The first wife runs the household, subsequent wives being assistants to the husband. The deficiency of available women which results from polygyny is compensated by homosexuality between adolescent male cross-cousins (Lévi-Strauss, 1943 a).

The village is ruled by a chief, but each of the nomadic bands into which it splits during the dry season is led by a secondary chief. Chief-

648 dependent upon the whites for metal tools, guns and ammunition, and feel it necessary to visit white settlements. The Nambicuara are not above visiting white men for treatment of injuries and cases of severe illness.

619 The interband relationships of the Eastern Nambicuara, although characterized by tensions and periodic open conflicts, are based on a recognition of common origin, common speech, and a degree of intercourse through trade, marriage, and the performance of dances in common. The relations with the so-called wild tribes to the north, on the other hand, are based on war, not just on raiding for loot and women, but on a war of extermination. Although the bands south of the telegraph line no longer participate in war, the bands north of the line still fight on occasion with their enemies which they call the Saláunsu and which the whites call the Beiço de Pau.

721

●726 When preparing for a war the chief of the band takes the men into the woods and tells them that there are bad people to the north which they must kill. Then after singing a war song they set about making many arrows and war clubs. The night before the attack they camp near the village of the enemy. The men paint their bodies with the sap of some latex tree and their faces with urucú and charcoal. They then take leaves and stuff them into any holes in the ground or in trees around their camp. After all the holes are stopped up, they take the skin of an anteater, the skin of a toad, and the leaves of a tree, which are used in preventing rain, and burn them. The stopping of the holes is believed to prevent the enemy from hearing them, the smoke is to blind the enemy's *anúnsu* and, also, to make the enemy sleep soundly. The chief remains at this spot and sings all night with the shamans. At dawn the young men approach the huts of the enemy, stand in the doorways and shout, and when the occupants awaken they are shot down or clubbed. No one is spared. They then take whatever they can, burn the houses, and return to the chief and his singing shamans where the loot is distributed among the warriors.

621 The internal organization of the band is based upon kinship and is perpetuated through cross-cousin marriage. One belongs to the band of his or her mother. Julio explained that when the daughter of the wife whom he abducted from the Elótasu reaches puberty she will return to the

535 Anunze and Uintaçu tribes participated; and a festive dance in which we took part, executed in our honor at Três Buritis by the Tagnani and Tawite.

The war dance filmed in Campos Novos was later also [253] performed by the Tagnani in Três Buritis.

Armed with bows and arrows, the warriors form a line some 15 meters from a piece of wood which represents the enemy, singing in two-part time and marking the beat on the ground with their feet. [Fig. 25]

Two Indians leave the line, arrows ready and bows half strung, and walk as if cautiously hiding among shrubs in the bush. After a wide detour they come near the "enemy" and hurl their weapons at him.

This is the signal to attack; the singing ceases and a rain of arrows falls on the "unfortunate victim"...

41 Then they advance upon him and give him a thorough drubbing
224 with their bows or with sticks. Incidentally, this is always the func-
726 tion of the arrow--to immobilize the enemy or game and permit the attacker to come close and finish his work with blows. In the hunt or in combat, attack is always made from ambush. This is because the aim of the Indians at a distance [Fig. 27] is not as sure as generally supposed. The Nambicuara are not especially good archers. They certainly cannot draw the bow with their feet like the Bororo. Some can shoot well in height. They use no shield whatever either in the hunt or in war. After the attack they try to recover their projectiles. An arrow represents a certain amount of labor and must not be squandered...

They hold a number of arrows in their left hand and shoot them one after the other with incredible rapidity.

535 Men, women and girls participated in the festive dance.

A large circle was formed to the sound of an endless chant. The women stood on the men's left; pair after pair were joined until the circle was closed. [254] Each man placed his hand on the shoulder of the woman next to him. Within the circle, three girls of approximately the same age accompanied them in a close line, eyes lowered, hands crossed upon the chest. The girl in the center acted as a hub for this choreographic formation... [Fig. 43]

/216 cont./

224 The poisoned arrows are intended for hunting certain ani-
278 mals, some large birds, cervids, and especially monkeys.
411 Birds wounded by one of these arrows fall almost immediate-
[303] ly.

A monkey mortally wounded with an ordinary arrow or even a bullet often remains hanging from the branches. Under the action of curare it holds itself immobile at first, then begins to tremble and falls several minutes later (five to 10 at the most) as soon as paralysis is produced.

A peccary or small deer such as the Cervus campestris wounded in the body runs for one or two minutes, then stops exhausted, is attacked by tremors and lies down.

The tapir, very large, resists a long time; it can run for two hours before stopping; hence the Indians do not hunt it with curare.

[262] /217/ The meat of animals killed with curare may be
[252] eaten without harm; the Ñambikwara of the Juruena content themselves with cutting away the flesh around the wound impregnated with poison and colored yellow; the Çabanè do not even take this precaution.

278 Poisoned arrows are also used for war; this is perhaps their
411 principal object among many Ñambikwara groups, who possess
726 only a very few specimens during normal times.

None of the Indians know of an efficacious antidote. According to our informants wounds in the trunk would always be fatal to men. By immediately drawing out the arrow, it might be possible to survive a wound in a limb; in order to make their extraction more difficult, the points of the poisoned arrows, especially those of the Çabanè, are very lightly attached to their shafts.